MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff

News Release
For Immediate Release
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Contact: Morton County PIO (701) 426-1587

Morton County Responds to Rumor Involving Crop-Sprayer

Mandan, N.D. -- The Morton County Sheriff's Department is aware of the video and pictures that allegedly depict an aircraft spraying in the vicinity of protesters on September 28, 2015. We have been in touch with the owner of the aircraft but we are not releasing his identifying information for privacy reasons.

It is very important that our residents are aware that the aircraft in question was an agricultural spray plane (bi-plane) flying to a field to apply a product. The pilot noticed a DAPL helicopter in the area, and because its engine was too loud to use radio communication to identify its location, the pilot deployed a common tactic to alert the helicopter to the bi-plane's location. The protocol is to use vegetable oil (the same used in air shows) as a method to identify an aircraft in the area. What you see is the oil being burned off as it hits the exhaust; it is not a pesticide, nerve agent, or anything of the ilk. It's a safety measure to protect both the bi-plane's pilot and the pilot of the helicopter.

According to the North Dakota Highway Patrol, the bi-plane was flying at an altitude of 400 to 500 feet and was approximately ½ mile from the protestors. The FAA will be in contacted by the pilot, but the pilot does not anticipate any issues as the actions were in compliance with FAA regulations.

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